INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED PLANT SPECIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA AND THE GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR PLANT CONSERVATION[1]

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Abstract

Several international treaties contain provisions to regulate and reduce negative impacts of international trade on endangered plant species. Focusing on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), this paper aims to elaborate existing and potential linkages between provisions and activities of these conventions. Based on an evaluation of CITES documentation, fields of potential synergies and/or joint activities between CITES and the GSPC are indicated.

Key words: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC).

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement between governments aiming to ensure that trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. It entered in force on 1 July 1975 and, today, has 178 member parties (CITES, 2013a). Species covered by CITES are listed in three appendices. Appendix I comprises species threatened with extinction. CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species except for well-defined cases of noncommercial purposes. Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction now, but in need of close controls to avoid detrimental trade. Appendix II also includes so-called "lookalike species" of species listed in the Appendices. Trade in Appendix II species is possible with CITES permits. Appendix III contains species based on a request by a Party to CITES that already regulates trade in that species and needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent detrimental exploitation (CITES, 2013b). The CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP) is the decision-making body of the Convention and comprises all its member States. Technical Committees like the CITES Plants Committee (PC) are established to provide, among others, scientific background for evaluations, discussions, and decisions at the CoPs. Terms of reference of the CITES PC include periodic reviews of listed species (in order to ensure appropriate categorization in the CITES Appendices) or the drafting of resolutions on plant issues for consideration by the CoPs (CITES, 2006).

THE GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR PLANT CONSERVATION OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

In 2002, the sixth CoP to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted, through Decision VI/9, the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC). This strategy comprises 16 outcome-oriented targets to be reached by 2010 (CBD, 2002; Kiehn, 2002). After an evaluation of the implementation status of the targets in 2010, a consolidated and updated GSPC 2011–2020 with amended targets was adopted as Decision X/17 at the 10th CoP to the CBD

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in 2010 (CBD, 2011a, 2012). It is, however, widely accepted that its adequate implementation at a global level requires a major and proactive approach considering elements such as communication, capacity building, technology transfer, and financial support, among others (CBD, 2011b, 2013).

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation

Already at the 13th Meeting of the CITES PC in Geneva, 2003, the CITES started to look into potential interactions between CITES and the GSPC. In the report of the working group WG5 of CITES PC13 (CITES, 2003), the responsibilities of CITES for the implementation of GSPC Target 11, "No species of wild flora endangered by international trade" (CBD, 2002, 2011c), are clearly expressed. It is noteworthy to mention here that, vice versa, the CBD in its 2009 Plant Conservation Report stated that "in essence, Target 11 forms the core business of CITES activities related to plants" (SCBD, 2009: 34). In addition to the focus on the GSPC Target 11, the working group WG5 of CITES PC13 also identified other GSPC targets where CITES activities are likely to provide useful contributions (CITES, 2003: 20; table 1). Since 2003, both the CITES CoPs and the CITES PC continued their evaluations of potential synergies and joint activities with the GSPC. The latest actions in this regard are documented by Decision 15.19 of CITES CoP 15 in Doha, Qatar, 2010. Directed to the PC and the Secretariat, this decision reads as follows: "The Plants Committee shall collaborate with the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and with any processes established to develop the Strategy beyond 2010, provided it is related to CITES, as well as on other issues related to flora species included in the CITES Appendices, and the Secretariat shall communicate the contributions of CITES in the context of its Memorandum of Understanding with the CBD Secretariat" (CITES, 2010a). As a reaction to this decision, the 19th Meeting of the CITES PC prepared PC19 Doc. 8.4, which summarizes potential and real CITES contributions to the different targets of the updated GSPC 2011–2020 (CITES, 2011a). This document provides, in its Annex 1, a table that also can serve as basis for the discussion of such contributions (table 1). As a follow-up action, an intersessional working group was established at the 19th Meeting of the CITES PC (CITES, 2011e: 7) to draft a resolution related to the GSPC for discussion at the 20th Meeting of the CITES PC and for potential proposal as a resolution at the CoP 16 of CITES in 2013 (CITES, 2012).

WHAT CONTRIBUTIONS DOES CITES OFFER TO THE GSPC (CBD) BEYOND TARGET 11?

Valuable contributions of CITES to Target 1 ("An online flora of all known plants") (CBD, 2011c) are checklists produced by CITES as part of its implementation processes. These checklists cover different plant groups that include several genera of the Orchidaceae (Roberts et al., 1995, 1997, 2001; Smith et al., 2006; Sieder et al., 2009), *Aloe* L. and *Pachypodium* Lindl., in the Xanthorrhoeaceae and Apocynaceae, respectively (Newton & Rowley, 2001; Lüthy, 2007), succulent Euphorbiaceae (Carter & Eggli, 2003), Cactaceae (Hunt, 1999), carnivorous plants (Von Arx et al., 2001), and bulbiferous plants (Davis et al., 1999). Meanwhile, most of these checklists are available online.

As regards to the GSPC Targets 2 ("An assessment of the conservation status of all known plant species, as far as possible, to guide conservation action") and 3 ("Information, research and associated outputs, and methods necessary to implement the Strategy developed and shared") (CBD, 2011c), the listing of a plant species in an Appendix of CITES is already an indication for a certain need of conservation action related to this taxon. In addition, all listing and amendment proposals to the Appendices must be accompanied by an in-depth evaluation of the conservation status. These data are available for uses outside of CITES as well. In this context, it is also important to notice that only the Appendix I listing reflects an actual threat with extinction, while the Appendix II listing is intended to counteract a potential threat, if exploitation through trade is not controlled to be sustainable, or if the listed species can be confused with another one (lookalike taxa) that requires CITES protection (CITES, 2013b). Table 1 of the Working Group report to CITES PC20 (CITES, 2012: 4–5) mentions a number of other processes routinely carried out in the context of the work of CITES, which are potentially useful for the implementation of GSPC Targets 2 and 3: nondetriment findings (NDFs), periodic reviews of the three Appendices, and reviews of significant trade. These processes not only reveal additional data about the conservation status of the taxa involved, but also have produced methodologies, which are likely to be applicable for the implementation of GSPC Targets 2 and 3. See, e.g., information documents prepared for the 18th CITES PC Meeting (CITES, 2009).

In the context of the GSPC Target 7 ("At least 75 per cent of known threatened plant species conserved in situ"), the evaluation of the conservation status of taxa subject to listing and amendment proposals to the three CITES Appendices (cf. CITES, 2013b) normally includes data assessments on population level, with reference to distribution areas and habitats. These data can be helpful for in situ conservation programs for these species. This is exemplified in the Annexes 1 and 2 of CITES PC19 Doc. 14.3., related to Madagascan species of *Dalbergia* L. f. (Leguminosae) and *Diospyros* L. (Ebenaceae) (CITES, 2011b). Here, distribution and habitat data as well as the conservation status was assessed as the basis for potential listing proposals. In addition to these processes of data gathering and evaluation, efforts by CITES Parties to ensure sustainable use of CITES-listed species should also contribute to their survival in situ.

The CITES also contributes to Target 8 of the GSPC: "At least 75 per cent of threatened plant species in ex situ collections, preferably in the country of origin, and at least 20% available for recovery and restoration programmes" (CBD, 2011c). In the context of its operational work, CITES management authorities, in collaboration with the scientific authorities, have installed rescue and propagation centers for confiscated plants. These centers are often connected with botanical gardens and aim at the best possible curation for CITES-listed plants illegally transferred across borders, including options for ex situ propagation and potential repatriation of the material into the country of origin (and thus also of relevance in the context of GSPC Target 7). Cooperation between ex situ breeding operations and in situ activities are also addressed by CITES Resolution Conf. 13.9 ("Encouraging cooperation between Parties with ex situ breeding operations and those with in situ conservation programmes"). It urges:

"a) Parties to encourage ex situ operations . . . that artificially propagate Appendix-I plant species to seek cooperative measures that would support in situ conservation based on resources generated by those captive-breeding operations; and

b) Parties to encourage ex situ operations that breed or artificially propagate Appendix-I species within the range State, to support in situ conservation programmes; such support could consist of, inter alia, technical support, contribution of funds, exchange of specimens for reintroduction into the wild, capacity building and training, technology transfer, investment, infrastructure and other measures" (CITES, 2004).

Ex situ propagation is also explicitly encouraged by CITES Resolution Conf. 9.19 (Rev. CoP15) "Registration of nurseries that artificially propagate specimens of Appendix-I plant species for export purposes" (CITES, 2010b). Artificial propagation of plant species on demand on the markets is considered as a useful tool to reduce the pressure on populations of these species in the wild.

The sustainability of the intended use is one important criterion for NDFs of plant species listed in the CITES Appendix (cf. CITES, 2013b). This directly relates to the GSPC Target 12 ("All wild harvested plant-based products sourced sustainably") (CBD, 2011c). Such NDFs are preconditions for the issuing of CITES export permits and in some cases also for import permits. In addition, annotations to the three Appendices enable the regulation of certain target commodities, e.g., tropical timber or medicinal plant species.

Substantial contributions of CITES to the GSPC Target 13 ("Indigenous and local knowledge innovations and practices associated with plant resources, maintained or increased, as appropriate, to support customary use, sustainable livelihoods, local food security and health care") (CBD, 2011c) relate to plant species used in traditional medicine. In Resolution Conf. 10.19 (Rev. CoP14), CITES (2010c) gives clear guidelines for trade in such taxa, respecting and securing the rights and knowledge of indigenous peoples. Also, discussions about CITES and livelihood have taken place in the CITES Standing Committee, in order to promote traditional knowledge that ensures adequate CITES implementation, in particular related to the assessments needed for the preparation of NDFs (CITES, 2011d). The issue was also addressed at a symposium organized in May 2011 by Austria and the European Commission on "The relevance of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) to the conservation and sustainable use of CITES-listed species in exporting countries" (Abensperg-Traun et al., 2011). While the subjects dealt with there referred to the management of animals listed under CITES, the same principles could also be applied for CITES-listed plant species.

CITES has developed, encouraged, or commissioned the development of numerous training tools related to CITES-listed plants. This directly contributes to the GSPC Target 14 ("The importance of plant diversity and the need for its conservation incorporated into communication, education and public awareness programs") and GSPC Target 15 ("The number of trained people working with appropriate facilities sufficient according to national needs, to achieve the targets of this Strategy") (CITES, 2011a). CITES activities in this context include checklists, slide shows, and training courses on CD-ROM (see, e.g., materials provided by the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, <http://www.kew.org/conservation/cites-ind.html>) as well as training, Master's, and Ph.D. courses. The outreach of these courses is remarkable; e.g., the nine Master's degree courses in "management, access and conservation of species in trade: the international framework" at the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía in Baeza and the four associated Doctorate courses were attended by 235 individuals from 68 countries (CITES, 2011c). The latest development in this regard is the Virtual Campus, which is hosted by the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía in Baeza, Spain (<http://campusvirtual.unia.es/cites/>). This is still in development but already provides training material for NDFs and numerous resources.

SUMMARY

The examples mentioned above are clear indications for the high potential of synergies between CITES activities related to plants and the GSPC. Undoubtedly, the main field of the GSPC where CITES provides valuable contributions is Target 11. However, CITES and the GSPC can share tools, scientific results, and methodologies in other areas like taxonomy, methods of assessing conservation status, or capacity building. Already existing interactions in these fields are encouraging but can be improved. Lastly, an intensified communication between national CITES and GSPC authorities, academic audiences, and NGOs, as well as between the Secretariats of CITES and the CBD, are essential cornerstones for successfully implementing joint collaborations of mutual benefit.

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